

“SWIMMING WITH SEABEES”

Story and Photos by: ENS Virginia Blocher

CAMP MITCHELL, ROTA, Spain (NS) -- Seabees are getting wet in Spain! U.S.

Naval Mobile Construction Battalion FOUR (NMCB 4) has started taking Seabees to the pool to spiff up the command Physical Training (PT) program.

When the Battalion first arrived in Rota, Spain, PT consisted of company level runs in the dark. Spain's sun doesn't rise until after 8:00 a.m., and for safety reasons Seabees are limited to running in large groups. Unfortunately, there aren't many varied routes to choose from, and most contain huge hills. Needless to say, it wasn't long before the Seabees needed to spice things up a bit to keep from getting bored with PT.

So the Chain of Command decided to change things up a bit. Now there are several different PT formats for Seabees to choose from depending on their abilities, one of which is the new swim program. It was all perfect timing as the base indoor pool just re-opened.

The new swim program is a perfect low-impact exercise opportunity to keep those with injuries active and on their way to recovery. It will also help those who prefer to swim the Physical Readiness Test (PRT) improve their times, and it is also a great way to stay in shape.

Surprisingly, few Seabees know much about swimming. Even though swimming the PRT has always been an option, few have had an opportunity to improve their times unless they happened to pursue it outside of work.

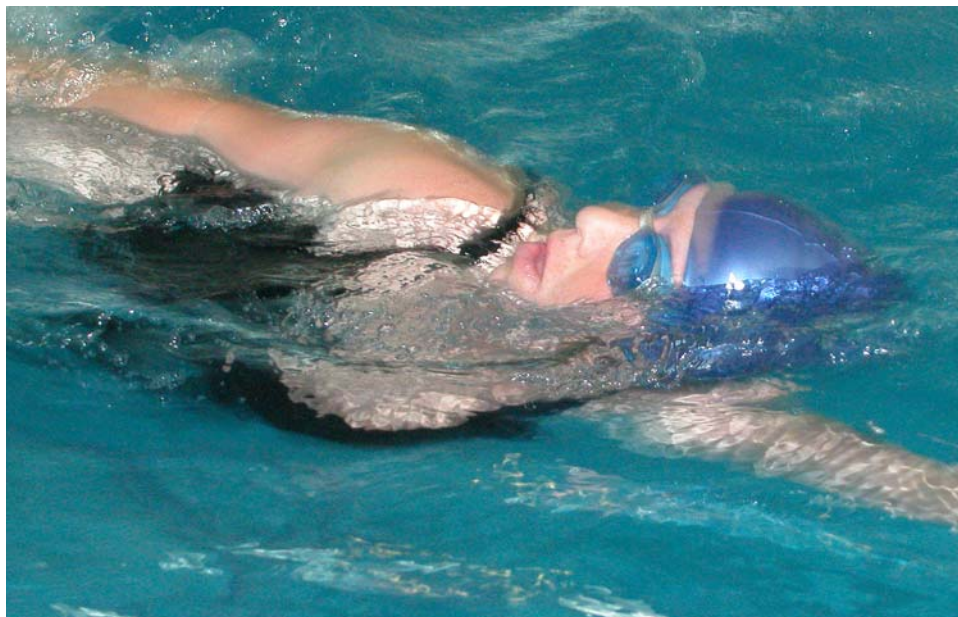
“It is all about technique and practice.” This is the mantra for instructors Senior Chief Construction Mechanic Kathy Keith and Ensign Virginia Blocher. Not all swimming expertise comes from the upper Chain of Command. One expert swimmer, Construction Electrician 3rd Class Ryan Nichols swam for and coached a swim team. He also enjoys this chance to educate his swimming Seabees.

The students, especially those who have little to no experience with swimming, are making substantial progress. One Seabee, Equipment Operator Constructionman Joel Williams, has a significant fear of water and is recovering from surgery. He voiced his intentions, “My goal is to learn to swim before the end of deployment.”

Unfortunately, these Seabees are on a tight schedule and can only manage three half-hour swim sessions a week. “If we had more time we could work on technique, strength training and endurance, but 30 minutes just isn’t enough to cover everything. The pool is not open on weekends yet, but we are working it,” said instructor CMCS Keith resolutely!

Regardless of the challenges, the new Seabee swim program is a refreshing success because it is well supported by the Command. The improvements Seabees are making in their own fitness levels and swimming form are a testament to this program.

Photo Captions:



Swimming Seabee RP2 Joy Ramirez is quickly mastering the Freestyle stroke during a morning exercise session at a base pool located at Naval Station, Rota, Spain. Seabees from NMCB 4 are deployed to Camp Mitchell, Rota, Spain during a six-month deployment from their homeport in Port Hueneme, CA. (U.S. Navy Photo by ENS Virginia Blocher.)